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STUDY PROPOSAL TO ANSWER:

***ARE THERE OPTIONS TO THE CURRENT
PRACTICE THAT MIGHT PROVIDE MORE
EFFICIENT WAYS OR PATTERNS TO ORGANIZE
HOW THE GRADES PreK-12 PROGRAM IS
IMPLEMENTED/DELIVERED?***

For the:

*Horseheads
Central School District*

Prepared by:

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*"Custom tools and research to aid a school district in defining a vision and
decision options for serving students in the future."*

STUDY QUESTION:

ARE THERE OPTIONS TO THE CURRENT PRACTICE THAT MIGHT PROVIDE MORE EFFICIENT WAYS OR PATTERNS TO ORGANIZE HOW THE GRADES PreK-12 PROGRAM IS IMPLEMENTED/DELIVERED?

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to identify options which can be implemented by the Horseheads School District to minimize short-term and long-term operational costs which may include, but need not be limited to, consolidation and/or reorganization of the District's delivery of instruction and the modification of the use of existing district facilities. A goal is to identify \$5 million of annual lower costs without jeopardizing the values of the district and the community concerning the student program offered or the quality of the program/services provided to students.

Methodology: PHASE ONE—Data and preparation of the findings of the study.

In summary, the approach to accomplish the feasibility study begins with 'holding up a mirror' with a collection of pertinent data; a review of major findings; sharing of perceptions and recommendations based upon challenges and opportunities inferred from the data; and finally the modeling of options.

A. The role of the researcher is to “hold up a mirror” to data about the school district, organize the data without bias; and to identify and recommend (as guided by the data) possible options and *opportunities and challenges* of various scenarios to implement/deliver the educational program. The role is accomplished with transparency of the data; with no bias toward particular possible options; and without advocacy of which option(s) ‘should’ be implemented. The only stake the consultant has in what the Board ultimately implements is: ‘Did the work of the study help the district make the best decision possible to serve Horseheads students in the future?’

B. School Building Capacity Analysis

- The School Building Capacity Analysis inventories the PreK through grade 12 spaces in the buildings including those now rented applying SED guidelines with regard to operating capacity and Building Aidable Units. The analysis enables the district to know how much ‘added’ enrollment it could handle by local Horseheads School District class size policy/guidelines and ‘by the SED rules’. The Study defines any gap between local Horseheads class size policy and the district’s vision for program delivery reported by the district for the future. The study also identifies excess capacity, if any. The capacity analysis provides a framework for district discussion as to how best to configure buildings and potential attendance zones, if applicable. The district provides:
 - Existing schematics (fire drill ‘maps’ are fine) of all the buildings.
 - A copy of any current board policy and/or teacher contract language about class size is provided by the district. The analysis will assume the current program offerings and it will integrate the crafted vision by the district of what it hopes the program offerings and needs may be in five years.
 - An inventory by each principal as to how each space in each school building is assigned for direct instruction or for instructional support to implement the PreK-12 program in the 2012-2013 school year. An inventory tool is provided to the principals to gather baseline data about how the program is implemented in each building.

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C. Enrollment Projection Calculations Study Data

- *District Need: The last enrollment projection study took place in October of 2009. Update the estimated future enrollment trends of the district. The enrollment calculations study is based on historical enrollment data and historical live birth data and patterns of enrollment at the various grade levels. Provide an estimate of the impact of systemic Academic Intervention Efforts on dropout/completion rates and therefore future enrollments in the senior high school over the next ten years.*

An ENROLLMENT PROJECTION CALCULATIONS STUDY includes:

- An enrollment projection and school-wide demographics study analyzes historical enrollment trends, live births since 2002 and historical kindergarten enrollment. The school district provides baseline data for the study as outlined in the attached list. The study provides 6 projections for the school years 2013-2014 through 2022-2023. They include: a low, mid, and high projection based on just historical trends as identified by the cohort survival statistic; and a low, mid, and high projection based on historical trends and the possible positive effect of continued AIS efforts as well as Response to Intervention Programs. The calculations study assumes that potential residential development in the district and potential jobs creation in the school district region will continue in the pattern it has over the past six years and will not influence 'spikes' in enrollment or added population to the district different from the historical pattern since 2007. The study complies with long range planning outlined in Commissioner's Regulation section 155.1.

The district names an administrative staff liaison and provides baseline historical enrollment pattern data. The liaison also helps the study to access other district staff for research information and other data as necessary.

D. Visits to the District:

- A meeting with superintendent, other senior leadership staff, and the principals is scheduled to listen and learn as comprehensively as possible the short range and long range objectives of delivery of the program in the existing facilities. The meeting/discussion helps to build an understanding of local conditions, values, and points of view that could affect the viability of various suggestions and options to use the current facilities to the very maximum.
- In order to gain as full of an understanding as possible of the master schedules of each building, the vision of the instructional program expected to be delivered by the Board and community, and the opportunities and constraints of the preK-12 facilities, each building is visited. The school building visit is hosted by the principal and includes discussion about the curriculum, its delivery, and how the facility helps or hinders that delivery.
- *A primary architect of the district's architectural firm collaboratively joins visits to the buildings to listen, observe and participate in the tour and program discussions with each respective principal.*

E. Data Sets: In collaboration with district staff, the following data are collected from appropriate offices/district staff over the first phase of the study:

- ✓ Distances between the district buildings. Bus route distances and route times.
- ✓ *If available, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 migration data from beginning of the year to the end of the year; ---the number of children who enter after September 1 through June, and the number of children who leave from September 1 through June.*
- ✓ Special Ed FTE's assigned to each building for inclusion as well as self-contained.
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- ✓ ‘Teacher day’ and ‘student day’ times for 2012-2013.
- ✓ Existing formal or cultural criteria regarding implementing Multi-age classroom sections, if any.
- ✓ Class section sizes for each grade elementary grade level; English (Language Arts) class size sections at the middle schools and the high schools. (Chart tool provided by the Study.)
- ✓ Student period schedules at the middle schools and high schools.
- ✓ A chart that lists all shared staff between and among the school buildings for 2012-2013. (Chart tool provided by the Study.)
- ✓ Bus run/transportation data for 2012-2013. (Chart tool provided by the Study.)
- ✓ FTE cost for K-6 certified staff, 7-12 certified staff, and principals based on the 2012-2013 budget. (Chart tool provided by the Study.)
- ✓ FTE cost for support staff categories of personnel. (Chart tool provided by the Study.)
- ✓ Numbers of FTE staff that have left the district for all reasons except reduction in force for the school years from 2008-2009 through 2011-2012. (Chart tool provided by the Study.)
- ✓ Baseline data analyzed in collaboration with Hunt Architects:
 - ◇ The latest building condition surveys for the school buildings.
 - ◇ A chart showing current capital debt for each building including the amortization.
 - ◇ Begin to list on-going operational resources necessary to protect each building even if it was not to be used to serve pupils. For example, typical items include: utilities, building supplies, keeping the building at about 40 degrees; ongoing boiler inspections, upkeep, etc; daily security; fields upkeep; parking lot upkeep (no grass growing in parking lots); ongoing insurance coverage....
- ✓ Other data sets identified in collaboration with the District as the Study learns more about the culture, goals, and vision of the District.

F. Identify various options to organize and implement the delivery of the preK-12 program and suggest *opportunities and challenges* of each option.

- Prepare a report to identify a range of possible options that might provide the opportunity for more efficient ways or patterns to serve students and organize how the grades preK-12 program is implemented/delivered. Possible opportunities and challenges of each option are listed with a focus on students. Possible options for deployment or redeployment of existing staff are outlined as may be inferred from and substantiated by the data. Possible financial opportunities and challenges are also included.
- *Work closely in collaboration with the architect firm for the district who will provide their expertise to analyze ‘brick and mortar’ influences/items/considerations, if any, of each scenario option identified by the study and their potential costs and/or savings.*

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Methodology: PHASE TWO—Report the findings to the school community and the school district community as mutually scheduled with the district. Tap the perceptions and ideas of community stakeholders about the various options through an organized Focus Group process. Document the work of the meeting of the Community Focus Group as a tool for the Board of Education and the overall community. (In mid September to early October 2013)

- G. It is suggested that the study and the synopsis findings of the study provided by the Consultant are posted digitally on the school district’s website.

The findings of the study and the study are printed for availability for all members of the community and staff who attend a public or staff meeting for the presentation of the findings.

A mutually scheduled meeting opportunity for the district community and a scheduled meeting the same afternoon for the district staff community to learn the findings of the study is arranged. The study consultant and the primary architect of the district’s architecture firm host both meetings to present the findings of the study.

- H. In September 2013, the consultant organizes and facilitates a Community Focus Group meeting. A key and valuable source of information and community perspective is the organization of facilitated meeting of a Board appointed Community Focus Group. At the discretion of the District, the creation of a clearly representative group of community members also can be nurtured by the Board to become key communicators or a ‘task force’ as the Board proceeds with a process to analyze and choose a possible scenario option to pursue.

Purpose of the focus group:

The purpose of creating a Community Focus Group is to provide representation for all residents, taxpayers and stakeholders of the school district. The Focus Group meets with the study consultant as an ‘outside guest’ for a scheduled meeting after the community and school staff meetings where the findings of the study are presented. A Saturday from 8:30 AM to about 2:00 PM may be best for the focus group. The study consultant as a ‘guest outsider’ listens and records the information and perceptions of the community members. A written report of the outcome of the Community Focus Group meeting is prepared by the study consultant. The documented work of the Focus Group becomes a valuable data set tool for the Board as they work to make a decision about which option(s) to implement.

Composition of the Focus Group:

A Community Focus Group is comprised of community members representing a cross-section of individuals and organizations within the district. (The study consultant provides a sample community invitation about the focus group that the District can adapt.)

It is suggested that volunteers can represent (with acknowledged credibility by the community) the point of view including, but not limited to, the following categories: pre-school children parents, elementary and secondary pupil parents, ‘empty-nesters’, seniors who are retired, business persons/chamber of commerce representatives, faculty who are resident taxpayers, support staff who are resident taxpayers, student government leaders, municipality (various) elected leaders, under 30 years of age unmarried citizens, clergy, music-athletic booster organization parents, realtors, banker/insurance representatives, and others who the general community respects and often seeks out their opinions on important issues/topics facing the community.

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It is suggested that 40 to 60 people be sought for this Focus Group who will work with the findings of the recent study. The number of participants will depend upon the number of scenarios/options that the feasibility study identifies. For example, if there are eight scenario options identified by the findings of the study, then at least 40 folks should be appointed to help ensure as specific information as possible is recorded about community perceptions regarding the options. Forty focus group members allows the implementation of the focus group into option discussion groups of 5, then 10, then 20 and finally all 40 community members.

It is suggested that the members for the focus group include as close is possible (as an example for 40 members):

- 1 parent of a pre-school child
- 3 parents of PreK,1,2 pupils
- 3 parents of 3,4,5 pupils
- 3 parents of 6,7,8 pupils
- 3 parents of 9-12 pupils
- 2 'empty-nesters'
- 2 'seniors' who are retired,
- 3 business persons/chamber of commerce representatives,
- 3 grades PreK-5 faculty who are resident taxpayers in the district
- 2 grades 6-8 faculty who are resident taxpayers in the district
- 2 grades 9-12 faculty who are resident taxpayers in the district
- 1 elementary principal who is a resident taxpayer in the district
- 1 secondary principal who is a resident taxpayer in the district
- 2 support staff who are resident taxpayers in each district
- 2 municipality (various) elected leaders/representatives
- 2 under 30 years of age unmarried citizens
- 2 clergy
- 3 others like realtors, or banker/insurance representatives, community service organization members, and others who the general community respects and often seeks out their opinions on important issues/topics facing the community.

In addition, it is important that the members also are as evenly as possible representative of the current elementary attendance zones.

It is advised that, except for the resident faculty representative and the resident support staff representative, all other Focus Group members chosen have no current direct employee relationship with the district. In addition, it is advised that all Focus Group members chosen have no immediate household members who have a current direct employee relationship with the district.

General Characteristics of Successful Focus Group Members Include:

- The ability to listen to all sides of an issue and to respect the opinions of others.
- Acknowledged by the community as one who represents a 'constituency' within the respective district.
- The ability (and comfort) to openly and accurately convey ideas and information verbally.
- The ability to see a 'big picture' yet able to appreciate and understand details with a focus on the main mission of a school district which is to serve students effectively and with quality as defined by the community.
- Has demonstrated a previous interest and involvement in some aspect of the school district and/or community.
- Believes in transparency of the planning process, work, and data.
- Is a resident of the school district.
- Understands and accepts that perceptions or suggestions of members of the Focus Group are advisory in nature to the Board of Education and the leadership of the district.

PROCESS FOR SELECTION OF COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS:

✓ The Board seeks citizens *who wish to be considered* as members of the Focus Group. This can be done simultaneously with a school district newsletter (website) letter, and through a commonly-prepared media news release or other manner by which the district normally communicates with the community. In addition, the Board of Education actively invites various specific citizens to consider volunteering to be a member of the Focus Group. This is done with a letter sent by the Board President on behalf of the Board to various community members. Then, the Board chooses the members of the Focus Group from all those who have volunteered—ensuring as best as possible that the Focus Group has members who represent the widest range of stakeholders of the community.

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✓ Although not absolutely necessary, it is suggested that the Board appoint, by motion, the folks as ad hoc members of a Focus Group to meet with a guest outsider on (date) to provide feedback about the district consolidation study. Their work is only for that date. Also, the meeting of the Focus Group is a public meeting. Since the Focus Group is appointed as an ad hoc set of folks for a specific purpose, it allows the 'guest outsider' to be *very welcoming* of others who come to the public meeting and at the same time explain that participation by those not members of the Focus Group is not part of the day's work. It is recommended that as many Board members and the superintendent attend the Focus Group meeting to listen to the work of the community group.

I. Publication of a report of the data compiled from the focus group as a tool on the web site of the district and in print form. Accomplished usually within 10 days after the Community Focus Group meets.

J. At this point the direct role of the study consultant is completed. However, if the district wishes help on one or more of the following, a plan for further service support can be crafted together.

◇ The Board has received the following:

The feasibility study; presentations of the findings to the community and school staff community; and a documented tool developed by a distinctly representative group of community members as to the identification of opportunities and challenges of various options for district consolidation; and a rank-ordering by the Focus Group of those options guided by their perception of what might be best for serving the pupils of the districts with available resources.

◇ Some possible next steps *as examples* for the Board and Superintendent after circa October 31, 2013 or so:

a) Choose one or more options to implement; share with the community and hold one or more public meetings to listen to feedback from the community. Execute a decision by Board action.

b) Choose one or more options to implement; meet with the community Focus Group to thank them for their work and to get their reactions to the preliminary option choices made by the Board; share with the community and hold one or more public meetings to listen to feedback from the general community. Execute a decision by Board action.

c) Choose one or more options to implement in the next or following school year by formal motion; advertise to the community by the usual means regarding public board meetings that the motion is on the agenda; if the motion passes, the superintendent begins implementation planning with staff.

d) Tap the talents of the current long-range planning community task force, and/or ask the Community Focus Group members to become a task force for further analysis of the prime scenario options the district might want to pursue; and/or pursue a combination of both approaches. Have 'family' public meetings with the 'task force' to ultimately recommend a scenario option from the primary options identified by the Community Focus Group for the Board to execute.

e) Don't make an implementation decision; use the findings of the study for further discussion over the next school year 2014-2015.

f) other

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Study professional services and fee:

‘Year 1’ through September 2013: \$22,885 including all expenses to accomplish the study as described above in A through I which includes: the baseline enrollment projection study; the baseline pupil capacity study; the main study that answers the study question posed by the Board; public presentation of the findings of the study, the facilitation of a Community Focus Group; and a written report of the work of the Focus Group.

‘Year 2’ from when the District assembles the Task Force : Not to exceed 100 hours or \$9925 to accomplish joint facilitation of a Community Task Force if the District proceeds with such a next step. This should be enough resource to allow for meeting and working with a Community Task Force that meets about once a month for up to a year. The district will be advised if and when the Task Force process may be exceeding the 100 hours allocated to it.

‘Year 2 option’: After the findings of the study are presented publicly and the Focus Group meets, the Board may wish to identify a priority set of options that in its judgment may be the best scenarios to consider for implementation after analyzing the findings of the study, and the report of the results of the Community Focus Group. Instead of instituting a multi-month Task Force, an option is to hold a second meeting of the Community Task Force already appointed. The purpose of the second Focus Group meeting is to have the widely representative group of residents provide perceptions of the opportunities and challenges of each of the option scenarios chosen by the Board to be the prime set of priority options for possible implementation. A written report documenting the work of the second Task Force is provided to the Board and community. The professional services fee for the ‘year two option’ is \$2600. From here the Board chooses an option to implement, holds one or more public meetings to enable the public to offer thoughts, and then--if it wishes--enacts an option for the superintendent to implement.

The study service is accessible through the COSER Planning Service from the Madison-Oneida BOCES. There will be three service adjustment forms for the services outlined in this service plan. One is for 2012-2013 for the ‘year one’ service (work) from November 30 through June 30 of 2013. The second will be for the ‘year one’ service (work) delivered starting July 1, 2013. If ‘year 2’ or ‘year 2 option’ work is pursued by the district, then a third service adjustment form will be provided to the district for prior approval before any ‘year 2’ service activity begins.

The school district may terminate the COSER planning services upon 30 days written notice. If the planning service is terminated prior to completion of the service as listed in any one of the three COSER service contract adjustment forms authorized by the district, the school district will pay for the service received according to the service plan to the date of termination and it will receive a service adjustment for the remaining unused service fees that were pre-authorized by a specific service adjustment form.

Printing: Printing of bound studies and other public documents related to the study (number determined by the district) is provided through a BOCES Printing COSER cross contract by the district with the Madison-Oneida BOCES.

Following are the three tools to gather the necessary initial baseline data, pupil capacity baseline data and the enrollment projection calculations baseline data. I will send them in “word” to ease the recording of the data.

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